

Susan Burke – New JJS Director, “Old G”

Written by Elizabeth Sollis, Public Information Officer
Wednesday, 12 October 2011 00:00



On July 5, 2011, Palmer DePaulis announced Susan Burke as the new Director for Juvenile Justice Services (JJS). “She has extensive experience with both the legislative and judicial branches of government in addition to her background in juvenile justice issues,” DePaulis stated. “I am confident that she will be a great leader for the JJS team and a key asset to DHS.”

Extensive experience is exactly what Burke brings to JJS. Twenty-one years ago Burke started her juvenile justice career as the Salt Lake Area Gang Project Community Coordinator. This position was new to Salt Lake, so Burke was sent to Los Angeles where she went for a ride-a-long and shadowed outreach coordinators. Upon return, she immediately began education, grant writing and outreach efforts.

Three years into her position, the Legislature held a Special Session due to two high profile gang-related incidents at the Triad Center and the Utah State Fair. One of the results of the Special Session was the creation of an Anti-Violence Coordinator within the Governor’s Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice. Burke was asked to take this position, which involved a comprehensive statewide community education effort.

From there, she became the Juvenile Justice Specialist, Director of the Utah Substance Abuse and Anti-Violence Council and then the Juvenile Court Assistant Administrator. After six years with the Juvenile Court, Burke joined Utah Department of Human Services as the JJS Director.

When asked what she likes about working in the juvenile justice field, her answer was swift and simple, “Being able to influence outcomes for kids.” This is especially important to Burke now,

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as her three children – who she adopted 14 years ago through the foster-adopt program – are the same age as many of the youth involved with JJS.

Even with three teenagers, Burke manages to find time to enjoy the ‘finer things’ in life. Which include reading, traveling, and cruising the streets on her newly acquired Yamaha FZ6R.

Burke has a Masters in English from the University of Utah.